

manufacturing managed to endure the downturn with less severe disruptions. For instance, some of the smaller metropolitan areas with large concentrations of food production (especially in the eastern counties) experienced only limited job losses in their manufacturing sector. Recent aerospace investments aided growth in Wilmington, Fayetteville, Durham, and the upper northeast (Hampton Roads area) and offset losses in other sectors in the Piedmont Triad.

For other areas, their relative economic position reflected how well industries such as financial services and distribution did during the recession. For instance, the banking crisis spurred early job losses that led the Charlotte area to experience unprecedented unemployment levels. As the sector recovers, the area is now undergoing a slow but steady recovery. More than 50,000 people work in finance and insurance in Mecklenburg County alone, accounting for 34.4 percent of the sector's total state employment in the finance and insurance industry; therefore, when the financial sector experiences a downturn, its effects are much more severe in Mecklenburg than anywhere else in the state. In addition, the downturn in manufacturing had a major impact on transportation and warehousing along the entire I-85 corridor, but especially in the Piedmont Triad and Charlotte areas.

Despite job losses during the downturn in professional and technical services, that economic sector appears to offer one of the state's best prospects for new job growth. Fully 58,000, or about one-third of the state's 177,000 professional and technical workers, are employed in Durham or Wake Counties. Other traded services like telephone call centers offer significant employment opportunities, especially in defense-dependent communities around Fort Bragg or Camp Lejeune where military spouses can be an invaluable source of available labor. Data processing also offers potential opportunities in some of the traditional Foothills manufacturing areas that still offer relatively low-cost power.

Robust employment growth in the state's health care sector will be largely tied to facilities in urban locations. The greatest concentration of specialized regional health care providers is found in the Research Triangle, Piedmont Triad and Charlotte regions. The Research Triangle area alone is home to one in four (24 percent) of the state's health care jobs, and represents the location of well over one in three (36 percent) new jobs likely to be created in health care. Anticipated rapid growth in the health care sector provides a wide array of new job opportunities for workers in the state's metropolitan areas.

### **Metropolitan demographics are more attractive to high growth industries**

As described in the 2007 report, North Carolina's ethnic mix continues to shift with rapid growth in the state's Hispanic population and an aging workforce. That pattern continues in all regions of the state, but with some unique aspects in terms of where new Hispanic residents choose to live and where the age structure of the population varies. This section also examines the importance of the state's cities as magnets for talent. In the state's metropolitan areas, the population tends to trend younger than in the state's micropolitan and rural communities. Metro areas have a larger concentration of young and prime working age adults as a proportion of their overall population. These areas also tend to have more pre-school and young children suggesting that young families are more likely to find their economic opportunities in the cities and suburbs (See Figure 30).